



Unfortunately, hundreds of heat-related deaths occur each year in the United States. Kentucky is well known for high summer temperatures and humidity, two (2) of the primary components that contribute to heat-related deaths and illnesses. Employers whose employees work in high temperature environments must be vigilant to ensure their employees are protected from the hazards associated with heat stress.

Much information is available relating to heat stress and the measures that can be taken to prevent it. Visit the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's website at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatstress/index.html> or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health website at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hotenvt.html> to learn more. Rather than repeat what has already been said, the Labor Cabinet would like to highlight a few points.

- Education is vital to prevent excessive heat stress. Implementation of proper workplace controls and work practices can prevent heat stress while the ability to recognize the signs and symptoms associated with heat stress, should it occur, can save lives.
- Provision of adequate water supplies is crucial. Most individuals exposed to hot conditions drink fewer fluids than needed because of an insufficient thirst drive. A worker should not depend on thirst to signal when and how much to drink. Instead, the worker should drink five (5) to seven (7) ounces of fluids every fifteen (15) to twenty (20) minutes to replenish necessary fluids in the body. Regular rest breaks also aid workers in hot environments, whether their heat exposure occurs indoors or out.

Heat stress is not the only hazard associated with outdoor work during the summer months. It is also necessary to protect employees from the harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun. This is easily accomplished through regular use of sunscreen and wearing clothing that provides UV protection.